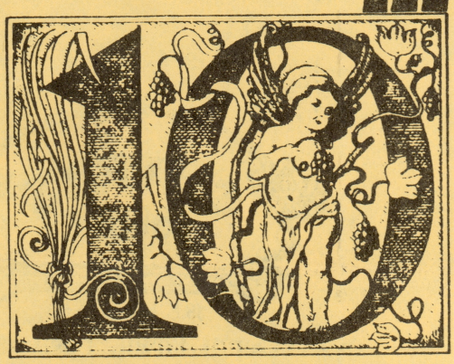
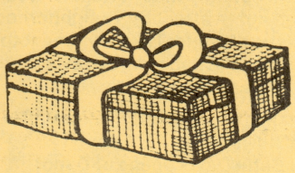
12/1980

Depot Town Association Inc

Next Monthly Meeting:
7:30 p.m. Thursday
18 December 1980
at the Caboose

depot town





TEN GOOD WAYS TO CATCH THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT . . . A CHRISTMAS WALK IN DEPOT TOWN

Saturday, 13 December 1980

1. 9:00 a.m. **Farmers' Market**
2. Lunch at the **Old Town Restaurant**
3. 2:30 p.m. tree-trimming in the Freight House
4. Salvation Army Quartet sing-along
5. Shopping at . . . **and Everything Nice, The Health Emporium, Jacqueline's Boutique, James MacDonald's Antiques**
6. Shopping across the street at **Hon's Flowers and Fancies, River Art Works, Contemporary Wood, Depot Exchange**
7. Open House at DTA Caboose
8. 5:00 p.m. Potluck Dinner at Carolyn McKeever's studio
9. 6:30 p.m. Caroling with the Historic East Side Association
10. Afterglow at the **Sidetrack** and **Oliver's Alibi**

Santa will be there, too!

Although many other commercial districts decorated with plastic Santas about the Fourth of July, Depot Town finds part of the month of December is plenty of time for the holiday hype.

Join all or any part of this festive day. Dress for the weather. Enjoy this old commercial district the way it was meant to be enjoyed.

BLABBITT SNATCHED, DEBATE POSTPONED

(DTA Caboose, 22 November 1980) The Ypsilanti Arts Council's stellar columnist was kidnapped from the Depot Town Caboose as she was about to defend her artistic comrades in a debate of local historical facts against the experts from the Depot Town Association.

Ms. Gotta Blabbitt arrived several minnutes late with a personal secretary/valet and a variety of seedy, artistic characters in her entourage. She was certainly overdressed for the occasion: floor-length red dress, imitation fur coat, bouffant hair-do, a wide variety of badly-set rhinestones and inch-and-a-half-long red-painted fingernails.

After several complaints about the setting, Ms. Blabbitt was interrupted by the more reasonable debaters from the DTA. "Let's talk about ground rules," we said. Ms. Blabbitt apparently saw this as the time to signal her cohorts to burst into the Caboose and stage the phoney kidnapping.

Two thugs with stockings pulled over their heads burst in without wiping their feet and nudged Blabbitt out of the meeting. Their clumsiness may have been caused by the fact that they were wearing a pair of No-Nonsense Pantyhose and were joined at the neck. To be sure, these "Siamese thugs" added some stimulation to the Arts Council's belabored attempts to either inform or entertain.

DTA President, Carolyn McKeever, noted, "Highly un-artistic. Over-stated, done before. What has art come to?" Gerry Meadows, of the Follett House Associates, asked, "Who were those masked men?" In fact, he asked that same question fourteen times. Gerry always has that knack for getting to the root of the situation.

YAC residue now says it hopes for a re-match between the two organizations. They hope for a "more appropriate" setting. We'll see. They may find Blabbit's disappearance a blessing in disguise to their "Snooze and Views" quasi-monthly newsletter.

Festive Festooning

Many thanks to Joe Wizauer of **Hon's Flowers and Fancies** for making available at great savings the natural pine roping which graces so many of the Depot Town retail facades.

Sidetrack Parking Lot Greatly Improved

The well-developed parking behind the **Sidetrack** was formerly the "coal yard", with a rail siding and five three-story coal silos. Since their removal, only coal dust and pot holes remained. Several abandoned vehicles found homes there for a long while. Now the Sidetrackers have graded and filled that space in preparation for an application of loose asphalt. Quite an improvement! Others who are still waiting for the City-financed South Side Parking may wish to follow **Sidetrack's** example and improve their lots themselves.

DTA-Sponsored Insurance Now Offers Health/Hospitalization/Life

If you are interested in becoming part of this comprehensive group insurance plan for Depot Town Association Members and missed the first three informational meetings held, contact DTA treasurer, Greg Hochradel, by leaving a message at the Caboose.

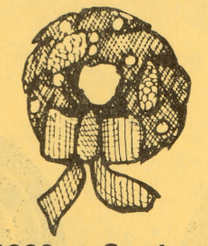
Life Insurance Program Facts will be available to association members in addition to the Hospitalization Plan or by itself.

Features:

- Permanent-whole life insurance - cash value (not group term)
- Policy to be issued in individual's own name.
- Low cost (choose either $3, $4 or $5 per week.)
- Insured will own policy even if he would leave the area or the association.

DTA Caboose: A Great Place for Your Holiday Party

Several good dates remain open for you to plan your event in your own private railroad car . . . to celebrate the Holidays. Call 482-6371 now to reserve the Caboose for your event.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Jacqueline's Boutique opens this month at 25 E. Cross Street. A resale shop for "gently used women's clothes", Jacqueline will take women's clothes and accessories of all sizes on consignment. Look for dresses, blouses, slacks, skirts, coats, formals, hats, purses, scarves, shoes and more. She asks that you bring consignment items clean, pressed and on hangers. Another special feature of the shop is a bridal dress service. You can call Jackie Leonard at 487-9582 evenings to make arrangements for pick-up and delivery.

DTA T-Shirts Reduced to $4

The bright red T-shirts (with "Stroh's" on the front and DTA Caboose logo on the back) are now available at the Caboose for only $4. (previously $5.00!) All sizes are available. These could make great gifts for out-of-towners.

Dues Paid? D.T.A. Membership Cards Ready to Mail Out

THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION

is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character and history of the Depot Town Area and to ensuring the economic growth and stability of the area. Regular membership $20 annually, Associate membership $5 annually. The Association meets on the third Thursday of each month in the Caboose at 400 Market Place.

Planters Need Attention Again

These pages have praised our neighbors who worked so hard to plant and keep the bountiful planter boxes since last Spring. They have never looked more beautiful. Now it is time to harvest those little gardens. Simply dig them up and turn them under . . . right in their own space. It's a game anyone can play. Last year Kathy Sorensen-Helzerman cleaned up every one of the flower beds in the block. Let's see if others might want to get in on the fun this year. Pick a planter. Dig it! Many thanks to the summer planter tenders. The block has looked great this year.

1980 — Contrast Seen in Depot Town

While the rest of the world seemed to disintegrate on the 5:30 news, this little block saw much progress, many improvements. Maybe we just weren't paying attention, but the international mood seemed not to affect this neighborhood's optimistic attitude. Take a moment to pat yourself on the back as you review 1980's **LOCAL** Accomplishments:

- Merchants support DTA newsletter with advertising
- **The Bette Davis** opens at **Depot Exchange**
- Re-numbering system approved
- **Farmers' Market** starts 2nd year
- 100 year-old Caboose arrives
- **Hon's Flowers and Fancies** opens
- **Webers** rennovates facade
- New lights installed in Market Area
- **. . . and Everything Nice** opens
- Amtrack ads Superliner coaches to the "Michigan Executive" commuter
- Planters bloom bountifully
- "A Depot Town Rag" performed
- DTA wins Department of the Interior Award
- "Boomer Days" recall 1850's secession
- Caboose dedicated
- Tramp Art Show featured
- Hot Air Balloon Rides
- **Oliver's Alibi** facade completed
- **Alibi** designated historic building
- Paperback book exchange at Caboose
- Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers meets here
- **SPD Tile** returns
- Depot Town featured at Cranbrook
- South Side Parking Plan fizzles
- Heritage Festival draws 105,000
- **Old Town Restaurant** sponsors Depot Town Calliope in Heritage Parade
- Franzen Brothers Circus on Frog Island
- The Great Wallendas in Riverside Park
- DTA beer tents nets $1,400
- Rice/Market Street paved from Cross to Forest
- McKeever elected DTA President
- Depot Town in Heritage Foundation Calendar
- **Depot Town Coin Shop** becomes **Pilgrim Stamp and Coin**
- HUD application found ineligible
- JC/WEMU Fun Run races through
- Market moves into 100-year-old Freight House
- **Health Emporium** opens
- **JCT Antiques** moves
- DTA Health/Life insurance plan
- DTA/YAC debate, Blabbitt snatched
- **Sidetrack** parking lot improved
- **Hon's** decorates the block for Christmas
- DTA/Farmers' Market Christmas Party

Thanks to all who participated in the many events listed. This old block is alive and well! We look forward to even more of this marvelous sort of creative community cooperation during 1981. Keep it up, Depot Town; you've come a long way in just one hudnred fifty-seven years!

OLIVER'S alibi
-BOOZE BURGERS & BILLIARDS-
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Depot Town, Ypsilanti

WEBERS
37 E. Cross St.

J.C.T. Antiques
Antique American Furniture
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Depot Town
Ypsilanti, Mich. 48197
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Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
in historic Depot Town

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YPSILANTI • MICHIGAN

The acquisition of the DTA Caboose nearly a year ago has made "rail fans" of many of us who only waved at such rolling stock for most of the previous part of our lives. With that new enthusiasm has grown a small collection of reading material on the shelves of the Association's office (in addition to the paperback exchange found under the Caboose's cupola). Take time out from your busy day to sit in the Caboose and bury yourself in some authentic railroad lore. It's a great way to escape the pressures of Depot Town's newly-found success.

THE RAILROAD CABOOSE — William F. Knapke. A definitive study of vehicles like our own. We've lifted the jacket notes for our DTA Caboose brochure. "Must" reading for any real caboose buff.

ALL ABOARD WITH E.M. FRIMBO — WORLD'S GREATEST RAILROAD BUFF — Rogers E. M. Whitaker and Anthony Hiss. Frimbo is a fictional character whose life's goal is to ride every rail line in the world, sample every diner, drink in every club car. Detroiters will see just a bit of the George Pierrot style here.

RIO GRANDE GLORY DAYS — Gilbert A. Lathrop. Autobiographical; Lathrop's growing up around the narrow-guage and other lines in Cimarron, Colorado.

THE AMERICAN RAILWAY A reprint of an 1880's text on construction, development, management and appliances. Profusely illustrated. Comprehensive. Steam only, of course.

RIDING THE RAILS — Michael Mathers. Contemporary photos and text regarding boomers, tramps, hoboes, and other denizens of railroad yards. Nostalgic and up-to-date. Good parepation for the 1981 Boomer Days.

AMERICA'S FORGOTTEN ARCHITECTURE — Tony P. Wrenn & Elizabeth D. Mulloy. The National Trust for Historic Preservation's wholly unemotional justification for keeping these old buildings around a while longer; including such examples as depots, signal towers, freight houses and the like.

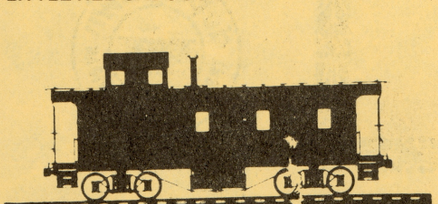
HOMETOWN, U.S.A. — Stephen W. Sears and the editors of American Heritage. A delightful picture book of towns much like Ypsilanti and particularly neighborhoods like Depot Town. Not at all academic. In fact, sloppily sentimental.

DTA CABOOSE SCRAPBOOK — A collection of letters, news articles, photos and snapshots documenting our own caboose's odessey from Melvindale (just west of Detroit) to Ypsilanti's Depot Town.

. . . and for the younger rail fan:

THE BIG BOOK OF REAL TRAINS — (simplified text for easy reading). Graphic descriptions of what's in which cars on those freights that lumber through our neighborhood, how the steam and diesel engines work, and who does what jobs on board the passenger liners.

and, what train book collection would be complete without Golden Book's **THE LITTLE RED CABOOSE?**



SARAH BERNHARDT SPENDS CHRISTMAS IN YPSILANTI

Dan Donovan tells, via **Railroad Magazine**, the story of "The Queen's" impromptu Christmas visit in our fair city in 1880. You can find Bernhardt's name on the wall in the Follett House ballroom. The Urania cut mentioned in the article refers to the siding near what is now the Ypsilanti State Hospital. True, the incident didn't happen on our Michigan Central tracks as they pass through Depot Town — it happened on the Ann Arbor line, but with an Ypsilanti address, nonetheless:

"I was the engineer who pulled the Bernhardt special from Ann Arbor, Mich., to Toledo, Ohio, on Christmas Day, 1880. The great actress, then at the top of her career, had been induced to give a performance at Ann Arbor on Christmas Eve. With her troupe and attendants, she traveled luxuriously in a private car. Scheduled to play in the old Wheeler Opera House on Christmas night, she had arranged for a special train out of Ann Arbor shortly before noon.

"The ground was covered with a heavy fall of snow, and while she was playing at Ann Arbor we had another snowstorm. Anxious to keep the road open, the superintendent at Toledo started a train of three empty boxcars and a caboose northward. The crew was instructed to return to Toledo shortly in advance of the special, to make sure that all cuts were clear of drifts.

"Thirty-five miles from Toledo the road had a long cut which gave much trouble. What snow had drifted into it had been pushed aside by passing trains until the cut was a deep, narrow passageway barely clearing the sides of the cars. The pilot crew reached Ann Arbor without difficulty, and the night's storm had ceased. So, with engine No. 4, we were called for 11 a.m. on Christmas Day. Our train consisted of one baggage car and Bernhardt's palace on wheels. The train of boxcars left at ten and found everything okay on the return trip.

"But at the departure of the special at eleven fifteen, the flakes began to fall again. We hadn't gone five miles before the wind became a gale and the snow grew thicker every minute. Then we were stuck in a cut near Urania, Mich. First I ran into the drifted snow. Then I went back about a train length and made a run for it. The snow sure did fly when we hit that cut. We plowed in about halfway and stopped so quickly that if I hadn't had a good grip on the throttle and reverse lever I believe I'd have gone through the front window. Then I tried to run back for another attempt, but couldn't move the train in either direction.

"After consultation with the conductor, 'Doc' Dwight, I found out what had halted us so suddenly. We had overlooked the fact that Bernhardt's rolling mansion was more than eighteen inches wider than our little cars, and we were wedged between those solid walls of snow like a cork in a bottle.

"Well, we shoveled enough snow away to get the slack, so we could cut off the engine for a run to Toledo to bring back a gang of snow shovelers; but when we tried to dig our way out, we found we couldn't make it. Doc went back and broke the bad news to the Divine Sarah; and he told me later that he'd never heard such a string of sizzling French before in his life.

"The blizzard was howling now. It was a cinch that we'd be there all day and perhaps all night. We each had a lunch with us, and Doc brought over a pitcher of hot coffee that Bernhardt's chef had donated, so we fared pretty well. We had about a third of a tank of water and plenty of coal, so I couldn't see anything to worry about. All afternoon the snow kept getting deeper and deeper.

"When morning came, we hardly knew it. We were buried so completely that hardly any light filtered into the cab. The cut was nearly full of snow, and the engine was entirely out of sight, with holes where the pops and the stack were. My fireman, Charlie, dug his way back to the baggage car. Doc and the rest of the crew were just commencing to stir around. They had a good fire in both cars all night, and were just as warm as we had been in the engine cab.

"Eventually, we dug a hole from the rear end out to the mouth of the cut and took a look at the outside world. We could see a farmhouse about half a mile away; and, as Bernhardt's eatables were getting low, Doc and the head brakeman waded over to forage for provisions. They came back in about an hour with plenty of good homemade bread and butter, some eggs, and a little tin bucket full of country sausage.

"About 10 a.m. we heard a whistle. Half an hour later a crew with some flatcars and about a hundred shovelers got to us and began digging us out. About three o'clock that afternoon we got going again. Sarah Bernhardt had got over her spell of irritation and gave passes to everyone in the crew. That was the first and only time I ever saw her on the stage."

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BOOZE BURGERS & BILLIARDS

WEBERS
37 E. Cross St.

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE — IN DEPOT TOWN

12/1980

Just a year ago DTA polled its business managers: "Would you consider placing an ad in the monthly newsletter to aid in meeting printing expenses?" "Heck, yes!" was their reply. Since then the following have entirely subsidized this publication:

Old Town Restaurant
River Art Works
Sidetrack
Shear Genius
Ted's Auto Electric
Oliver's Alibi
Jim MacDonald's Antiques
Depot Exchange
J.C.T. Antiques
Webers

$50 yr.

$150 yr.

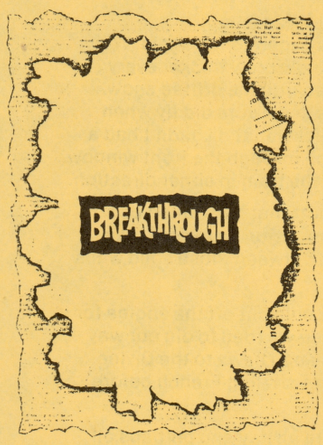
$200 yr.

Not only does the association greatly appreciate their support, but the entire neighborhood deeply respects their involvement in the life of this community.

As we approach the new year, we offer what seems to be an even better plan for such participation: twelve months of advertising, 500 copies montly, unique layouts, coupled with interesting local news and a loyal readership . . . for even less cost than last year! Where else are prices going down?

Depot Town Merchants: save this issue. Contemplate the new rates. Design new copy. We'll be around to plan with you before the January, 1981 issue is pasted up.

. . . your Depot Town newsletter staff.



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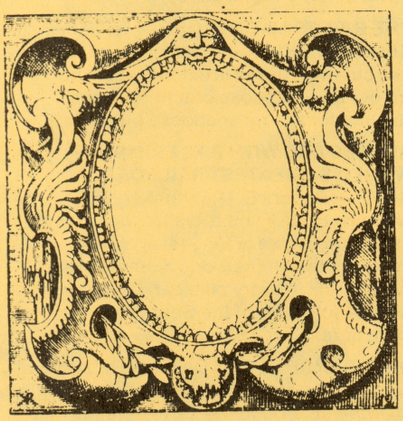

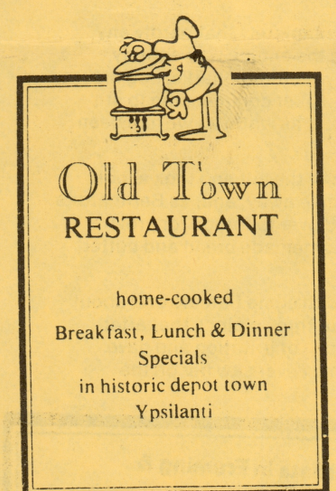

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